

USACE Implements Change to Better Serve The Nation

The United States Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works program touches the lives of many Americans on a daily basis. That contact may be through the international commerce generated at USACE-maintained ports and harbors, the commodities shipped through inland waterways, the protection provided by flood and coastal damage reduction projects, water supply, hydropower, recreation associated with Corps' projects, environmental protection or restoration, or disaster response when needed.

The Civil Works program is executed to meet the needs of the American people as expressed through their elected leaders. Civil Works projects are authorized by law with funding from the administration and Congress, and accomplished at the request of and in partnership with communities and sponsors across the nation.

In the recent past, the Corps' has committed itself to achieving more open communication within the organization and with other federal and state agencies, elected leaders, stakeholders and critics in an effort to learn more about how the Corps can improve its service to the nation. Based on that communication, the Corps has acknowledged the need for and implemented several changes in the organization's structure and in its Civil Works project planning and execution processes.

Among the key changes are:

Process modernization initiatives. The Corps' has implemented a number of organizational and process modernization initiatives to enhance its service and responsiveness to the nation. Among them are:

- **Independent peer review**
 - Nearing the completion of basic peer review guidance.
 - The guidance builds peer review into a district commander's project study and applies it where it adds the greatest value.
 - Peer review to be used to review scientific information related to a project, not policy decisions.
 - Intent is to identify controversial scientific components of studies early in the study process, and then to use both internal and external peer review to address and reduce project risk and controversy.
 - Guidance incorporates provisions for public feedback for every project's peer review plans.
- **Planning and Guidance**
 - Updating and clarifying the Corps' project study planning guidance.

- Strengthening and emphasizing the technical skills needed by the Corps' to execute its project planning processes.
 - Implemented the Planning Associates program to strengthen the technical capabilities of project planners within the Corps.
- **USACE 2012**
 - USACE and division headquarters act as a single headquarters to streamline processes. Eliminating a layer of review eliminates duplication, fosters integrated teamwork, and streamlines project review and approval.
 - Establishes Corps' division headquarters as regional business centers that share resources and distribute workload among the districts in the command to maximize customer support and responsiveness.
 - Establishes regional integration teams at the headquarters that combine a variety of technical and non-technical skills in support of the regional business centers.
 - Regional integration teams use a collaborative, project-based approach to problem solving rather than the former stove-piped functional skill approach.
 - Establishes Communities of Practice to foster technical competence and share knowledge among individuals who have a common functional skill
- **Civil Works Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2004-2009**
 - Published in March 2004 to meet the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993.
 - Lays out the organization's broad goals and strategic objectives for the Civil Works program from 2004 through 2009.
 - Incorporates feedback the Corps has received from the public, stakeholders, Congress, non-governmental organizations, and other federal and state agencies concerning national water resources needs, and from participation in national and international water policy summit meetings.
- **Federal Principals Group.** The Federal Principals Group has been an invaluable part of the Corps' ability to complete its recent studies on the Upper Mississippi River/Illinois Waterway System and the Louisiana Coastal Area restoration, and is an inherent part of the Everglades Task Force and Working Group. The Federal Principals Group was established to bring together representatives from other federal stakeholder agencies to:
 - Build collaboration and scientific integration into critical USACE projects.
 - Provide their input, perspectives and concerns on large and nationally significant USACE studies early in the planning process.
 - Communicate how a USACE project may relate to or potentially conflict with their agency's mission, and to work together to

recommend changes that might be needed to make the potential project compatible for all agencies.

- **Project Management Business Process**
 - Establishes standard business processes across all USACE mission areas based on industry best business practices.
 - Provides a long-term curriculum/culture program to create and retain a learning/capable workforce in USACE business processes.
 - Assures USACE business process remain relevant and current.

Environmental Initiatives/Focus. Substantial progress has been made over the past several years in incorporating environmental criteria in the Corps' project planning and formulation. Key ongoing or planned environmental restoration projects include the Everglades, Coastal Louisiana, and projects on the upper Mississippi, Missouri and Columbia rivers. These projects demonstrate the nation's commitment to an approach that balances the need for continued economic development with the acknowledgement of the importance of a sustainable environment.

- **Environmental Operating Principles**
 - Formalizes seven environmental principles applicable to all USACE decision-making, programs and project management processes.
 - Ensures conservation, environmental preservation and restoration are considerations in all Corps activities.
 - Help define the Corps' environmental role when working with other federal agencies, tribes, state and local governments, and the private sector in seeking to achieve environmental sustainability.
- **Wetlands Mitigation.**
 - Issuing guidance to create a programmatic mitigation tracking system that will better identify the need for future program changes.
 - Engaged in an ongoing effort to clarify Corps and non-federal sponsor responsibility to monitor the success of mitigation, and to ensure mitigation is monitored long enough and thoroughly enough to ensure success.

To learn more about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, visit www.usace.army.mil.